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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Thursday, Jan. 14, 1932

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Making the Most of Your Looks." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics and the Bureau of Chemistry, U.S.D.A.
Bulletin available: "Leather Shoes, Selection and Care."

Let's declare a holiday from housekeeping this morning. I'm in the mood to forget about menus and recipes, to put dishwashing and darning and such serious, everyday matters out of my mind and be frivolous and feminine for a change. Are you willing to chat about clothes and making the most of your looks and so forth? Now and then when the menfolks are away, I like to play with a few purely feminine thoughts.

Speaking of making the most of one's looks, did you ever consider that it's not always the clothes one wears that make for style and give that smart, well-dressed appearance? Posture may have a lot to do with it. The way you walk, the way you stand or sit, the way you carry yourself often makes the impression on the onlooker rather than the clothes you wear. I know a woman---she lives just around the corner from me---who looks like royalty even in very old clothes. Yes, she actually looks stylish in clothes that are out of style. And I know another who spends a lot of money on dressing, yet who usually looks dowdy just the same. The difference between these two is chiefly a matter of good and poor carriage and posture. Some women look well-dressed when standing and badly dressed when walking. It's often the way they carry themselves that makes the difference, rather than the fit of their clothes. If a dress, or a suit, or a coat is to fit well at all times, good posture is necessary. This is especially true of present-day styles because they follow the lines of the figure, and are thrown out of position when the figure's lines change.

"Oh, dear," sighs Clementine Cummings. "This new dress is a perfect failure. It looked so very attractive and becoming in the shop. But now that I've started wearing it, it doesn't seem to fit well or something."

What's the trouble? My guess is that Clementine stood correctly while she was being fitted to the dress. Before that big mirror in the shop she kept her shoulders up and held herself erect. But when she wore the dress outside, she fell back into her usual habits of slouching and slumping.

Costumers who know their business suggest three ways of obtaining the good form that gives a dress style. Exercise is one way. Second, diet, if you need it. And finally, wearing the right underwear.

"My, my, Jane, you must be taking on weight," exclaims Tilly, when she sees Jane in her new, close-fitting dress. "Look at those bulges around your waist."

That was a wrong guess on Tilly's part, however. It's not Jane who has those bulges. It's her underwear. Bunchy, frilly underwear can completely

destroy the good lines of a sheer, snugly-fitting frock. For many dresses underwear serves as a foundation and its lines are important because they affect the lines of the dress. Smooth -fitting underwear, then, for the well-dressed woman.

Strange as it may seem, it was a man who gave me some interesting pointers on wearing jewelry, by suggesting that jewelry may hide or may display faults in appearance. He was a rather young man and was seated across the table from me at a dinner party.

"Did you ever notice that jewelry can make a woman appear tall and slender or short and plump?" he said.

"Well," I thought to myself, "some young men certainly have queer ideas."

"I've observed," he went on, "I've often observed that a string of beads or a pair of earrings or even a ring can emphasize the good points in a face or a figure and hide the poor ones by calling attention only to the best. Jewelry can make a line of a dress seem longer or shorter. And it can add a note of interest or bring out color in a gown."

Along about this time I began to prick up my ears and listen to what he was saying. I decided that sometimes even a mere man may make worth-while observations on feminine matters.

"If I were a woman, I'd consider line, color and texture very carefully before I bought any jewelry, even the most inexpensive pin or chain. Proportion and unity are important also. For example, a delicate, finely wrought necklace would be entirely out of keeping with large, heavily-set earrings or with a rough sports suit. Also a delicate, dainty chain would be unbecoming to a person of generous proportions. The delicacy of the chain, you see, would just serve to bring out the size of the figure wearing it."

"As for rings," continued this wise young man, "I have some ideas about them also. I think rings should be selected to emphasize the attractive lines of the hands, to make them look more slender and artistic. A big ring on short, stubby fingers draws attention to those unattractive fingers, makes them conspicuous. And fat fingers, well, I think they look fatter wearing any kind of a ring."

Some truth in all that, don't you think?

While we're talking about effects and appearances, let's not forget to consider shoes.

I'm convinced that many an unpleasant or unhappy face is caused by uncomfortable feet. Yes, and I'm convinced that many a disagreeable disposition is caused by the same thing. Tight shoes and tantrums often go together.

"Poor Edith Rogers. She looks as if she had lost her last friend. I wonder if there's been a tragedy in her family."

Tragedy? I should say so. Edith is trying to break in a pair of new shoes that don't fit her now and never will.

Then there's the matter of awkwardness. No girl can have grace and beauty, even if she's born with wit, when she's wearing too tight or too heavy

shoes. She's just bound to walk and stand awkwardly until she changes to a correct fitting pair.

Shoes should be comfortable above all else. If the change from the low heels that you wear with sports clothes to the high French or Spanish heels that you wear with afternoon or evening gowns cause trouble, why not select medium heels for all occasions? Plain shoes with medium heels for sports and dressier shoes with medium heels for dressy occasions.

Straps and laced shoes are often more becoming to women than pumps because the straps tend to make ankles look smaller. Also straps hold the foot more firmly and keep the shoe from slipping and rubbing.

As for stockings, whatever shade you choose, remember to avoid contrasts in color. Wear dark hose, for example, with dark shoes and a dark skirt. Why? Because they tend to make ankles appear smaller and slimmer. Sharp contrast, you see, has a way of affecting both size and shape. Light stockings worn with dark shoes and a dark costume seem to shorten and thus widen the ankles. Dark stockings worn with light costumes will, naturally, do the same thing. But a color that harmonizes in value gives an unbroken, continuous effect.

Do you remember how aunts and grandmothers and mothers used to urge us to wear our overshoes because wet feet caused colds? Overshoes not only preserve health but they also preserve shoe leather and help us keep that well-groomed look--an item my grandmother never thought of mentioning. In bad weather overshoes are an aid to both good looks and the pocketbook.

Moisture is likely to remove the finish that keeps shoe leather pliable and prevents it from cracking. Because shoes are among the expensive items on the clothing budget, it pays to care for them. If they are wet, they should be stuffed with crumpled paper--tissue paper preferably---and dried slowly, away from the direct heat. Quick drying in strong heat cracks the leather, and tight shoe trees in wet shoes may stretch them out of shape.

Cleaning and polishing, Mary Ann, not only keep shoes looking nice but also remove any mud at once, since mud stains leather.

Does it pay to have shoes repaired?

The answer to that should generally be a decided "Yes." Shoe repairing is to skillful these days that shoes must be of very poor leather indeed, if they won't stand repairs. Run-down heels ruin the shape of shoes and should be leveled at once. If the shoes are of good leather, if they are well-made and well-fitted, it pays to have full soles hand-sewed on when the first set shows wear. Full soles look better and wear longer than ordinary half soles.

There now. I knew I would become thrifty and practical before our chat was over, even though I did start out to be frivolous.

Do you know about that bulletin called "Leather Shoes, Selection and Care"? It's a very useful publication, containing lots of valuable information about shoes. There are directions in it for waterproofing shoes, for example. There are directions for protecting shoes against mildew, for dyeing them, for oiling and greasing and taking out stains. If you want this bulletin just write me for Farmers' bulletin No. 1523, "Leather Shoes, Selection and Care."

Tomorrow we'll talk over the family budget for 1932, why and how to make it.

